

MM
PRECEDENCE

CLASSIFICATION

FROM: THE SITUATION ROOM//TOSCO 70//

TO: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

INFO:

DEX _____

DAC 0103

GPS _____

LDX _____

PAGES 2

TTY _____

CITE _____

DTG: 04 14 24Z

RELEASED BY: JP

TOR: 04 14 50Z

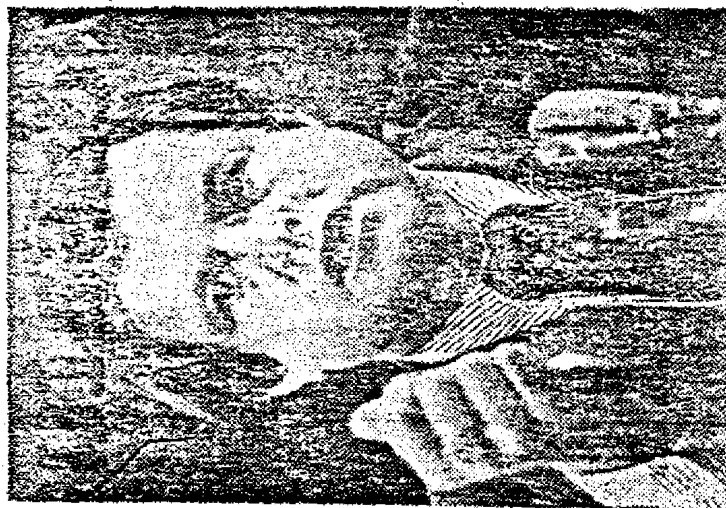
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

TOSCO 70

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

75 DEC 1975/DEC 14 1513 58

WASHINGTON POST DEC. 4, 1975



In his first public appearance since his dismissal, former defense secretary James R. Schlesinger on Nov. 23 posed on NBC's "Meet the Press" a challenge to the critics of his policies. Excerpts from his remarks, and an invited response to his challenge from Sen. Edward M. Kennedy follow.

"There is some question whether the forces of the United States are equal to a military challenge."

SCHLESINGER:

If we want to stay at peace and we want to maintain a stable world order, then we must maintain an adequate military balance. The trends are starkly adverse over the last seven or eight years with respect to U.S. and Soviet military capability.

We still have an edge in strategic nuclear power, though that will diminish as the Soviets deploy their new generation of weapons. We probably have a qualitative edge in tactical air. We have equivalent naval forces to the Soviet Union, but the demands upon us are much stronger.

The great problem of the United States and its allies is the very powerful ground and attack forces and growing mobility forces of the Soviet Union that can be used around the periphery. There is some question whether the forces of the United States are equal to a military challenge.

If one includes the question of political will -- and this is reflected in sensitive barometers such as the attitude of the nations represented in the United Nations -- there is a grave question about the stability of the United States, the effectiveness with

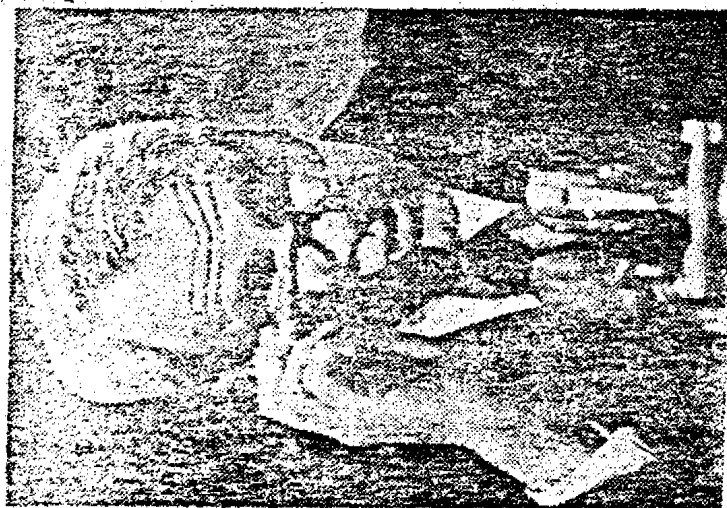
which it can reach decisions, political will, cohesion. I hope these questions do pass. But for the moment, the Soviet Union is in the position in which it has the initiative.

We as a nation are indulging in an ostrich syndrome, in burying our heads in the sand and not observing what is going on. The Soviets have increased their military establishment to over 4 million men. Today, they have twice as many men as we have. They have, in recent years, produced four times as many subs and surface combatants as we have. They are producing 70 per cent more tactical aircraft. In ground

forces equipment, it is a production ratio of seven and eight to one.

As a share of their national effort, they are at about 15 per cent compared to about 5 per cent for the United States. If you convert that into dollar terms, they are outspending us, leaving portions aside, by some 45 per cent, and the trend is worsening.

What we have is a slight from reality. And I regard that as most unfortunate for the United States. I have said these things in the past, but the press picks up these questions at budget time and says we are waving the flag of alarm.



KENNEDY:

I believe that Dr. Schlesinger is, indeed, again waving what he called "the flag of alarm." His perspective both misses the essence of the task facing the United States in the world for the years immediately ahead, and makes debate more difficult on our real defense needs. Yet in view of his distinguished career in this area, we must look carefully at his approach and take seriously his concerns.

Too often, however, in attempting to justify its military programs, it is all too tempting for the Pentagon at budget time to present a grim picture of growing Soviet military strength, while our own supposedly declines. A blizzard of statistics seeks to emphasize areas in which the Soviet Union is ahead or gaining; while ignoring or playing down real American advantages in the equality of manpower and weapons—practically across the board; the far higher level of effective U.S. seapower that makes Soviet percentage increases seem far more meaningful than they are; and the statistical devices used to inflate the Soviet defense costs in terms of U.S. prices for our more effective and sophisticated manpower and weapons.

This last technique has led the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency to testify that "the absolute value figures (for Soviet defense spending) remain suspect, and the aggregation of such figures to a total budget number is highly suspect.

"In no area of the world do we now conceive any military threat to our security which our forces...would be unable to meet."

Meanwhile, a principal Senate supporter of a strong defense, Chairman John Stennis of the Armed Services Committee, declares "alarmist charges and speculation on the weaknesses of U.S. seapower."

At the same time, raw comparisons of budget, weapons, and manpower figures ignore—where there have been Soviet increases—the vast differences in the military objectives of the two superpowers: where, for example, the Soviet Union has a million men on the Chinese frontier (but we have no similar commitment), and uses sizeable forces to maintain control over East European countries.

Yet even if we accepted the figures advanced by Secretary Schlesinger—and the interpretation he has made of them for the future—his case remains unimpressive. U.S. security is not defined primarily by particular Soviet defense efforts, but rather by the threats potentially facing this country and its allies. In no area of the world do we now conceive any military threat to our security which our forces, in being and projected, would be unable to meet. In Europe, the Middle East, the Pacific—and in strategic forces—the United States is well prepared to deter threats to our vital interests, and, if need be, to defend these interests. This is the "balance" that matters: not an effort to outspend the Soviet Union for reasons of prestige or an unsubstantiated belief that total military spending—rather than ef-

fective forces—to meet specific threats—defines national military power. Nor can we ignore the fact that, despite cuts made by Congress in this year's defense budget, it is higher in real terms than last year's.

Dr. Schlesinger is on even weaker ground in discounting U.S. political will to meet its commitments abroad, or to counter genuine threats to our security or that of our allies. This is a rebash of a view presented last spring, during the closing days of the Indochina war. Yet there is little evidence that any ally—or any adversary—doubts that the United States would respond to threats to its security. Questioning of U.S. will has been a wound self-inflicted by a few administration leaders, not by the Congress of the American people.

But there is an even broader sense in which we need to approach problems of national security. There is no denying the need for military forces fully adequate to our needs. But it also imperative for the United States to look at other sources of strength and weakness—both at home and abroad. At home, we are threatened by a failure of administration leadership in managing the economy far more than any putative deficiencies in military power. And abroad, we face a challenge to U.S. leadership—especially in the realm of international economics—rather than any lack of will or ability to counter military threats.

The current misstatements of U.S.

priorities is now more evident than in the continuing surge in our strategic nuclear programs. This is an area in which even Dr. Schlesinger concedes "we still have an edge," though again he sees ominous trends for the future. Yet instead of applying our best efforts to get real agreements at SALT—advancing U.S. security—we are preparing a whole new generation of weapons (the cruise missile), while planning doctrines of counterforce and "limited" nuclear war that could still result in 20 million or more American deaths. Here, as elsewhere, we are subjected to comparisons of raw numbers, carefully selected by the Pentagon, without being told about U.S. advantages in quality (and often in numbers); the nature of real threats, or the relevance of U.S. forces to meet these threats. "Overkill" in nuclear arms is pursued for its own sake, then justified in terms of a calculus of nuclear balance that bears little relation to the tasks confronting us in the strategic arena.

If we are truly concerned to meet the challenges facing us as a nation in the years ahead, we must regain perspective about the military threats facing us and our allies, and both analyze and react to those in their own terms—in an atmosphere of reason and calm debate.

C 1975, International Dialogue

International Dialogue, which appears from time to time on this page, is a series of debates, organized by syndicated columnist, Victor Zorza.